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News Release

Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency

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195 TEAMS SIGN UP TO COMPETE IN THE DARPA GRAND CHALLENGE
$2 Million Prize

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) announced today that 195 teams filed applications to compete in DARPA Grand Challenge 2005. DARPA will award a $2 million cash prize to the Grand Challenge team that builds a completely autonomous ground vehicle that travels the fastest time in under 10 hours across approximately 175 miles of treacherous desert roads and trails.

Using Congressional authority, DARPA created the Grand Challenge to accelerate the development of autonomous vehicle technology to replace manned vehicles in dangerous missions and save lives on the battlefield. The Grand Challenge will be held in the southwestern United States on October 8, 2005.

DARPA Director Tony Tether expressed his delight at the large number of applicants. "When we first thought about the Grand Challenge in 2003, we genuinely believed only a handful or so of teams would be interested in competing," he said. "It takes ingenuity and perseverance to build a vehicle that can win the Grand Challenge prize. We were surprised when we received 106 applicants for the first Grand Challenge competition, which we held last year and no one won. The response to this year's Challenge is an even greater surprise."

Tether added: "The teams learned from watching the 2004 event how tough the Challenge really is and yet more people than ever are willing to work long days, nights, and weekends to give it a try. The Grand Challenge has inspired a spirit of innovation and competition across the country. Their efforts will help save the lives of our men and women on the battlefield."

DARPA Grand Challenge 2005 Program Manager Ron Kurjanowicz said the teams represent 37 states and three foreign countries. Thirty-five of the teams are university-based, and three are high schools teams. Kurjanowicz was particularly pleased to note that 160 applicants are new to the event and that all of the teams that competed as finalists in the March 2004 Grand Challenge have filed applications for this year's event.

- *Note: For a complete list of teams, please visit the DARPA Grand Challenge website at* **www.darpa.mil/grandchallenge**.

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"The Grand Challenge has spawned an intense awakening of interest in autonomous ground vehicle technology," Kurjanowicz said, adding: "It's very difficult to build a robotic vehicle that can avoid obstacles and travel the Grand Challenge course at the speeds necessary to win the prize. The diverse community of inventors, engineers, technicians, and tinkerers that has come together around this event seems determined to demonstrate the know-how that could win the $2 million prize."

The February 11, 2005, initial application deadline is only the first of several requirements the teams must meet on their way to the October 8, 2005, Grand Challenge event. By March 11, 2005, teams must provide DARPA with more detailed information about their entries, including a vehicle specification sheet and a video demonstration of their vehicle in action.

Teams that pass the vehicle and video review will receive an in-person site visit during May 2–13, 2005. Following the site visits, DARPA will select 40 vehicles to advance as semi-finalists to the National Qualification Event, at California Speedway in Fontana, September 27–October 6, 2005. At the Speedway, the semi-finalists' vehicles will go through a series of competitive tests. At the conclusion of the National Qualification Event, DARPA will select 20 finalists to compete in the October 8, 2005, Grand Challenge event.

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DARPA is the central research and development (R&D) organization for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). The agency manages basic and applied R&D projects for DoD and pursues research in technology areas where the risk and payoff are both very high and where success may provide dramatic advances for traditional military roles and missions.